

2. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 [in which the] wherein the process [is for] further comprises forming a protective coating on a substrate [in which] wherein the metal conducting surfaces are less electropositive than silver and which comprise [comprises] conductive metal pads [and/or] or through-holes of a bare board, and in which the substrate includes non-metallic areas which remain uncoated in the process.[, preferably solder-mask coated areas.]

4. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the complexing agent is present in a higher molar amount than the silver ions[, preferably at least twice the molar amount].

5. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the silver ions are present in the displacement plating composition at a concentration of from 0.06 to 32 g/l [, preferably from .1 to 25 g/l, most preferably from .5 to 15 g/l].

6. (Amended) A process according to claim [1] 4 in which the complexing agent is present in the composition in an amount of from 0.1 to 250 g/l [, preferably from 10 to 100 g/l].

7. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the complexing agent is selected from the group consisting of ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid, diethylenetriamine penta-acetic acid and N, N, N', N'-tetrakis(2-hydroxy propyl)ethylene diamine.

8. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the displacement coating composition comprises surfactant, wetting agent, stabilizer, and wherein the displacement coating composition also includes a material selected from the group consisting of grain refiner [and/or] or tarnish inhibitor.

10. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the displacement plating composition is free of reducing agent [capable of reducing] which reduces the silver ions to silver metal and free of halide ions.

11. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the step of contacting the metal conducting surfaces with the aqueous displacement [coating] plating composition is by spraying or dip-coating in an immersion bath and in which excess composition is reused in the process.

12. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which the metal conducting surfaces [is] are contacted with the [immersion coating] aqueous displacement plating composition for from 10 seconds to 10 minutes, [preferably] at a temperature of from 10°C to 60°C [, most preferably at a temperature of from 15 to 50°C].

14. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which prior to the [immersion] displacement plating composition step, the metal conducting surfaces [is] are cleaned by contacting with an

acidic cleaning solution in an acid cleaning step [, preferably undergoing a post-rinse step prior to the immersion plating step].

15. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which prior to contacting the metal surface elements with the [immersion] displacement plating composition, the metal conducting surfaces [undergoes] undergo a micro-etching step, and [preferably] wherein between the micro-etching step and the [immersion] displacement plating composition step, there is an additional acid rinse step.

17. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 in which a [conductor] component is subsequently soldered [direct] directly to the silver coating.

18. (Amended) A multi-step process for producing a bare board of a printed circuit board including the steps of:

i) providing, by a subtractive or additive process, [a substrate having] exposed metal conductor traces and pads [and/or] or through-holes on a substrate, said metal being less electropositive than silver[,];

ii) applying a mask to cover at least the said traces and leaving at least some of the pads [and/or] or through-holes exposed, the mask being of an insulating composition[,]; and

iii) forming a silver coating on the exposed pads [and/or] or through-holes by contacting the metal surface with an aqueous displacement plating composition comprising silver

Ag₂ ions
ions and a multidentate complexing agent in solution in an aqueous vehicle and having a pH of from 2 to 12, to form a coating of silver on the metal surface.

Please add the following new claims:

- a₅*
19. (New) A process according to claim 2, wherein the non-metallic areas are coated with solder-mask.
 20. (New) A process according to claim 4, wherein said aqueous displacement plating composition contains at least twice the molar amount of said complexing agent than of said silver ions.
 21. (New) A process according to claim 1, wherein said silver ions are present in said displacement plating composition at a concentration of from 0.1 to 25 g/l.
 22. (New) A process according to claim 1, wherein said silver ions are present in the displacement plating composition at a concentration of from 0.5 to 15 g/l.
 23. (New) A process according to claim 1 in which the complexing agent is present in the composition in an amount of from 10 to 100 g/l.
 24. (New) A process according to claim 1 in which the metal surface is contacted with said aqueous displacement plating composition for from 10 seconds to 10 minutes, at a temperature in the range 15°C to 50°C.